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News American demise

A terrible trend is taking place in America and the end seems nowhere in sight. That trend is the death of daily newspapers that often leaves a community with only one source for printed news.

New York, which once had several daily papers, now has three, and one of them is financially troubled. The papers that have been dying most rapidly have been afternoon papers, such as the News American, whose news coverage could not compete with the immediacy of television coverage of the news, despite the fact that television comes nowhere near a newspaper in terms of depth.

Morning papers seem to be the ones holding their own. Still, the declining readership of newspapers means a less informed citizenry charged with the task of making a democracy work.

When a newspaper dies and leaves its rival alone as the accessible public record of events in a city or town, history is recorded from one viewpoint. Public opinion is swayed from one viewpoint.

When the ownership of a newspaper is combined with the ownership of a television station and/or a radio station, the persons who control that particular media empire have an undue influence on public opinion

The city will miss the News American, because it provided a multitude of things that its rival does not. Life was richer when the two papers were competing.

THE AFRO will attempt to help fill in the gap, but there is no substitute for a daily paper. The News American will be missed.

Hands Across America

According to organizers, Hands Across America was a rousing success. Although there were some gaps, the spirit of the endeavor stretched across this nation as millions held hands to benefit the needy.

The question that must be asked is how much will the event help the hungry and homeless in this country? As with all fundraising efforts, there is sometimes a gap between promises and paying.

The more money that finds its way to the agencies and groups working directly with the poor, the more successful Hands Across America will be considered.

A deeper question that must be asked is why is it that a nation that has millions of people willing to participate in an event to aid the poor such as Hands Across America can have a national government as insensitive as the one in Washington?

The efforts of the millions of people who support the charitable activities to help the poor are stymied by federal cutbacks on aid to the poor. Efforts such as Comic Aid and Hands . . . can only offer aid in a piecemeal way, while federal aid programs can blanket the entire country utilizing government apparatuses.

Humanitarian volunteer aid should only fill in the gaps, not be the primary source of aid for the poor in the richest country in the world. Beleaguered soup kitchens, such as Our Daily Bread here in Baltimore, should not have to bear the primary burden of feeding America's poor.

Hunger problem brushed off

President Reagan's recent remarks about the hunger crisis again reveals the detached attitude his administration has about one of the nation's most acute problems. The president told a group of students that the hunger problems is caused by a "lack of knowledge" about where to obtain help.

This sort of statement is not only superficial but it lacks compassion and belies the often stated impression that this administration is concerned about the welfare and well-being of all "truly needy" citizens through its so-called safety net programs. The president's remarks also follow the callous statement by now Attorney General Edwin Meese that many hungry people would rather go to soup kitchens because they are too lazy to cook.

It is very easy to adopt a cavalier posture when all your material needs are availble at the snap of a finger as happens to many of our elected and appointed officials. Many of these so-called public servants become real czars once they assume office and they lose touch with reality, especially the powerless or those without political clout.

The euphoria of being in power with practically unlimited authority as long as one is a team- player is often too much for many individuals, regardless of the authority and power they had in the private sector. Here they get front-page treatment and deference just by being in office.

Sen. Edward (Ted) Kennedy of Mass. replied to the lack of knowledge charge that ignorance about hunger is caused by those who do not see the suffering of millions of Americans. He added that millions of people did not suddenly become ignorant, it happened because they or their parents cannot find work and the vaunted "safety net" has been cut away.

The president's remarks also fly in the face of several studies by well-known organizations with authentic credentials in the field of human welfare. The Harvard School of Public Health in a study recently said the administration has eliminated the programs that inform people about food stamp benefits. The study added that hunger and poverty have increased because new restrictions have been imposed. The Children's Defense Fund has also reported that eligibility restrictions are other reasons for an increase in hunger because many people do not know they are eligible for food stamps.

These findings are in addition to federal lunch programs being drastically curtailed. Many students depended on at least one decent meal a day and they are now deprived of that benefit because family budgets cannot make up the difference.

Many unfortunate citizens have to supplement their diets by depending on government handouts of surplus cheese and butter. At the other end of the spectrum, unlimited funds are available for foreign aid and influential domestic defense firms are awash with fat government contracts all under the guise of national security.

One guiding credo of this administration is that there should be less government and more state or private initiative in providing benefits for citizens. This idea that states are equipped to provide adequate goods and services is pure nonsense and has not worked so far. In the first place states are not equipped to provide the basic necessities because they lack adequate resources and do not have technology available to the federal government.

A valid example is when floods occur. The federal government has to get involved and provide disaster relief on a massive scale. Another valid example is that state and local officials provide relief on discriminatory basis according to social status despite pious denials.

As long as the president and his cohorts continue to display insensitivity and indifference those caught in the cycle of poverty and hunger will not be able to get out of the web that binds them unless they are lucky beyond foreseeable belief.





Anthony Armstrong

Smoke filled rooms

The first political organizations were probably peopled by cavemen. Of course they weren't called that at the time but, chances are they served much the functions then, that political organizations do today.

The role of the political organization is, generally and ultimately, to provide a focal point for help; help with jobs, help with housing, help in solving constituent problems of all kinds.

Since the turn of the century, political organizations in America served much the same role as do social welfare agencies, with one major difference.

Social welfare agencies, set-up and run with public dollars, are mandated to serve any and everybody. Political organizations, however, tend to assist only their dues paying, card carrying members-in-good-standing. As it should be.

Years ago the smart politicians knew that every citizen helped became a potential supporter and; that every supporter would eventually need help, the kind of help that grows out of being in the "game" of politics, whether one likes it or not.

People in-the-know have long understood that politicians help their friends and, the best way to become and remain a politician's friend is to join and be a member of that politician's organization. Politics is basically a simple affair; to the victor (and the members of his organization) goes the spoils.

In addition to being social help organizations and mechanisms for dispensing favors to supporters; political organizations are "machines" designed to get a slate of candidates elected to office.

This function is probably the single most important role of the political organization; because an organization that has no elected officials among its members is an organization that can't do anything for anyone and, thus no one will be interested in being a part of such a surely politically ineffective group.

Organizing a slate of candidates (usually called a ticket) and working to elect that slate is the linchpin of the political organization. The more elected officials from a given organization, the more power that organization can exercise the needs of its people.

The more the political organization can serve the needs of its people, the more powerful it can become.

Political organizations, especially if they are effective ones, are run on a model closer to dictatorships than democratic forums. Usually one person is clearly first among equals.

That leader-many fashion themselves godfathers - has the last word, cuts the political deals for the organization, shoulders the largest burden of raising political money, determines who will or won't get the organization's support and, selects those individuals who will carry the organization's banner into elective battles, as its candidates for office.

The godfather is strategist, diplomat, arm twister, boss. If the organization is a good one it is because the leader, the godfather, the boss is a good one; a real political player, respected by other political players.

People outside looking in think names like James A. "Jack" Pollack, Harry McGuirk, Tom Smith, Joseph Bonvegna, Clarence "Du" Burns, "Big" Bob Burns, Frank Gallagher, Willie Adams, Herb Brown and others (some living, some dead) are all terrible people.

People on the inside looking out see these political organization leaders almost as gods. Each, in his own way, has become political saint to large numbers of people who have benefitted from their role as leader of a major political organization.

Each has either served in elective office and/or been behind many who have served. Each was or is loving, understanding, people oriented, and giving; each did or does also exercise the biting grip of King Kong gone mad.

As in most things, we black people bring a decidely different set of attitudes to our understanding of the role of the political organization. When a black person is helped by a political organization, the attitude is often, "you didn't do anymore than you were supposed to do and I don't owe you anything back."

We don't remember that the politician has hundreds of people who wanted that same job, or scholarship, or house. In many cases we don't even feel a need to thank the political organization, through which the favor came.

It's a favor to you precisely because the organization, and its leadership, could have done the favor for Miss Jones or Mr. Brown but; instead, they did it for you. Furthermore, you may not even be a card carrying member of any political group.

On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of white political organizations do nothing for anyone who is not a member. Conversely, if anyone does receive help from a white political organization, that person is pledged to vote for the organization's candidates, work to elect those candidates and, join that organization.

When the political pie is sliced, those groups that are the strongest bring the most back to their constituents. Weak groups bring nothing back from the table because they bring nothing (no voter strength, no elected officials) to the table in the first place.

The next time somebody tells you about how dirty politics is, just ask them for the address of the place where the action is. Most people do a lot better after breathing the stuff from the smoke filled room.



Tony Brown's Comments

Buy Freedom

"Can T.V. producer Tony Brown's 'Buy Freedom' project fly?" asked Simeon Booker in JET magazine.

"National Business League President Arthur Teele believes that it's time for Blacks to begin supporting their own businesses and will launch a pilot 'NBL-Buy Freedom' drive June 6th in New Orleans. Already signed up for the initial move is New Orleans Mayor Sidney Barthelemy," the highly respected Washington Bureau Chief of JET added.

Booker's question, however, raises another question: What is happening with the Buy Freedom drive, announced last October? Before I answer that question, let me explain in more detail the NBL-Buy Freedom Connection, referred to by JET.

It is one of many associations made between the Buy Freedom drive and major Black organizations. Our objective is to spend up to 50 percent of our massive income ($200 billion in 1984; projected to be $900 billion by year 2000) with a Black-Freedom business or professional.

This will produce one million new jobs for Blacks for each additional billion dollars we keep among ourselves. Currently we keep only $12.6 billion (6.6 percent). If we adhere to the Buy Freedom Plan, we will keep $450 billion (50 percent) within 14 years and create 4 million new jobs.

That would mean a reduction in female-headed homes (projected to be 70 percent, already over 50 percent, by year 2000 when Black male unemployment is expected to also be 70 percent) because Black men could head families because they could find work — work that the Black community created with its own income.

Presently, for every five Black women who work, there is only one Black male employed. The government had proved that it is unwilling or unable to solve Black unemployment; indeed the federal government is committed to the "Phillips Curve," an economic manipulation to keep the general unemployment rate near 7 percent in order to keep inflation down. Of course, that's 6 percent for Whites and 20 percent for Blacks.

Once the Black consumer learns that wealth equals power and power equals Freedom in all forms (economic, educational, social and political), he or she will seek out a Black business that is committed to re-cycling the extra income spent by an aware Black community back into that community.

We call this group "Freedom" businesses because they have agreed to a five-point "Freedom" pledge: (1) treat the consumer with courtesy; (2) offer competitive prices; (3) give price discounts if possible; (4) create new jobs when possible; and (5) become involved as a business leader in solving the chronic problems (illiteracy, single-parent homes, unemployment, etc.) of our community. We, in turn publish a list of these businesses.

These "Freedom" businesses are identified by a "Freedom Seal" decal on the window and in their advertising. In effect, the 15,000 member businesses of the National Business League will be asked to cooperate and test the viability of buying our freedom.

On June 6 in New Orleans at the NBL's annual Founder's Day Dinner at the Fairmont Hotel, I will outline the pilot plan in a keynote address before the Who's Who of Louisiana and America (the governor, New Orleans Mayor Barthelemy, NBL Chairman C. J. Patterson, Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Mickey Leland, officials of the National Baptist Convention (7 million members) and the Progressive National Baptist Convention (1.5 million members).

Buy Freedom has already been endorsed by the NAACP and the National Black Leadership Roundtable (7800 leading organizations); the latter has pledged a specific quota of support, totaling one million members to buy from a Freedom business.

As a board member of NBL and chairman of Buy Freedom, I am fully aware of the awesome and frustrating task of reversing hundreds of years of psychological damage that results in economic, social and political ineptness. But this NBL-Buy Freedom pilot will work because we have the right idea at the right time with the right people involved.

The churches will preach the "Gospel of Freedom" (God wants us to live a good life on earth) and the NBL, founded by Booker T. Washington, will give us the kind of services we deserve on this earth.

AFRO welcomes letters

The AFRO welcomes letters from its readers. Letters should be brief and must bear the writer's name and address. All letters will be given consideration for publication.



Samuel L. Banks

Burden of Brown 1954

There was a cautious and restrained hope entertained by the battery of lawyers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, led by Thurgood Marshall, that the "Equalization Movement" launched in 1950 had achieved success by the momentous Brown I decision of May 17, 1954. The Supreme Court of our nation, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, spoke with clarity, directness and firmness:

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored schools. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of the child to learn.

Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated system . . . We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place.

While it is true that **de jure** (i.e., by law) has ended, **de facto** segregation is alive and well in the 16,000 school districts which serve 41 million youngsters in our nation's network of public schools.

At the time of the **Brown** decision of May 17, 1954, there were 25 million students and over 900,000 teachers in our public schools.

In view of the increase of students in public schools and the outmigration of whites and Blacks to suburban school districts, there are more racially-segregated schools than before the Brown decisions of May 17, 1954 and May 31, 1955.

Another paramount factor is that our nation has never mobilized the will and resources to achieve a desegregated body politic and schooling.

While the majority white society, in principle, especially since 1954, has paid lip service to the value of desegregated education in a pluralistic society, there has, in fact, been little actual effort to achieve the ideal.

The overwhelming burden and sacrifices have been borne by black Americans. It is they who have seen their predominantly black schools closed; witnessed the busing of their children, viewed as interlopers, to hostile white neighborhoods;

Observed the demotion and displacement of staff and the virtual elimination of black principals and supervisors, except for urban areas; an almost total disregard for black history, culture and pride.

The tiptoeing progress that was being made with **Brown** in the 1960's with a gain of one percent as year has now been eviscerated and placed on the national backburner.

President Ronald Wilson Reagan, with copious assistance from Attorney General Edwin Meese and Assistant Attorney General William Bradford Reynolds, has stalled desegregation by opposing busing as a tool to achieve school desegregation and failure to the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

The nation has now, in fact, 32 years after **Brown**, encouraged and sustained a four-tier approach to education:

1. urban schools, populated primarily by Blacks, Hispanics and impoverished whites, for large urban school districts.
2. specialized secondary schools for affluent blacks and whites and the academically talented and gifted who remain in urban schools.
3. suburban schools populated overwhelmingly by white students.
4. private and parochial schools that serve a majority white clientele in urban and suburban school districts.

The supreme tragedy of this four-tier approach is that a majority of black parents hobbled by the twin deficits of racism and poverty find it exceedingly difficult to provide the fiscal and monetary resources necessary for their children to be competitive and successful in an era of high technology and cybernetics.

In spite of the formidable odds, black parents must not abandon hope for the sake of their children. The issue is clear: high quality education remains the passport to successin our society.

The ideal affirmed by **Brown** away from the mythology of "separate and equal," still lingers, however muted, in the American body politic. We possess the capacity as a nation to revive the spirit of **Brown and move it forward. On this anniversary date, 32 years later, we need to mobilize the will.**

The national pullback on human and civil rights by the Reagan Administration and enveloping national meanness of spirit should serve to motivate Black Americans, especially the affluent, educated and skilled, to end the CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE insofar as the masses of our people..

Black leaders must remain in the forefront for what the Brown decisions affirmed 32 years ago. Not to do so, without fail, will be to reap a socio-economic, political and educational whirlwind.

African Liberation Day — no picnic

By Mario A. Schowers

A small family, its picnic lunch all set on a cushion of lush grass as the 11th annual DC observance of African Liberation Day by the All African People's Revolutionary Party was about to begin.

Two black men tossed a Frisbee as marchers were asked to line up and hold banners for the trek from Fairmont St., NW to the White House.

"This is not a picnic," a voice boomed over the microphone in a park known officially in a mostly black city of mostly black-elected political leaders as Meridian Hill, but more popularly by city dwellers as Malcolm X Park.

Under police escort, some 300 African-Americans marched from the park, down 14th St., past vacant hollowed-eyed dwellings and tattered storefronts that stared in stony silence and dreams deferred — past the lone pink concrete-and-glass new city of office building at U.S., the Central Union Mission, Mid-City Fish Mart, past street prostitutes, dope peddlers, curious Korean merchants, the all-night Peoples, financial district, the big white banks of Riggs, NS&T and American Security — before stopping briefly across the street from the White House's North Portico, then up 15th St., past the small garden party behind wrought-iron gates in the courtyard of the Sheraton-Carlton, the Capital Hilton, Soviet Embassy, its front door wide-open, the elite University Club and back to Malcolm X Park.

Downtown appeared almost a ghost-town, its thousands of federal workers away for the 4-day Memorial Day weekend.

"From Black Power Forward to Africanism — Join An Organization Working For Our People" were twin themes this year as reflected in thousands of yellow posters on the event plastered about the city with the image of Libyan head-of-state Mu'ammar Qadaffi superimposed on the continent of Africa. March organizers said this year's event was in unity with Qadaffi and the struggling people of Azania, or South Africa.

Kwame Ture, formerly Stokely Carmichael, 44, who lives part of the year in West Africa's Guinea, spoke of the Pan-African concept of African Liberation Day, conceived by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah in 1958, calling for a united, socialist Africa.

Though held here in the U.S. for the past 28 years, he said, such observances were spontaneous and haphazard until brought under A-APRP control in DC 11 years ago. "Opportunists tried to steal it," Ture said, "but they are no longer around, which reveals their insincerity."

Simultaneous observances were said to be held in Cincinnati, Dallas, Houston, Sacramento and St. Thomas, in the Virgin Isles, and also over the weekend in both London and Birmingham, England and in Paris, France.

Ture put down former revolutionaries like Eldridge Cleaver whom he said "called Reagan a mad dog in the '60s" but "bends over and kisses his boots in the '80s."

With its high unemployment and homelessness, Ture said, America is more ripe for revolution in the 1980s than it was in the 1960s. he said black people "burned 290 cities in the 60s to get 289 powerless mayors in the 1980s" and that despite the "16" Congress members and "5,000" elected state officials, of whom all are Democrats, blacks hold no political power within the Democratic party. "It's a Pig Party and it must be destroyed."

Another speaker, Minister Alim Muhammad in the Nation of Islam told the crowd, which grew larger when marchers had returned from the White House, that the recent trip to Libya by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, against the wishes of the Reagan Administration, now poses a foreign policy dilemma for the U.S., which has sought to drive a wedge between blacks here and abroad.

"We are in a 'win-win' situation. If they attempt to arrest Minister Farrakhan, we will free our brother . . . . What prison in America can hold Minister Farrakhan?" Thus, his arrest, Minister Muhammad said, will make Farrakhan a martyr and galvanize black people. "If they leave hime alone," he said, in the wake of Reagan's ban on travel to Libya, it will show "the President lacks the moral authority to tell a black man what to do." Either way, the outcome will show that the black man is free in America, Minister Muhammad said.

He also called the Hollywood motion picture "The Color Purple," a means of "psychological warfare . . . to disrupt our budding unity" between black women and black men here in the U.S.

Speakers from the American Indian Movement expressed on going friendship between Red and Black men, told of a plan by the Government this July 8 to uproot and forcibly relocate 10,000 Hopi and Navaho Native Americans from a reservation at Big Mountain, in Arizona.

They urged black support to prevent the relocation effort and said Kwame Ture and Minister Louis Farrakhan both have pledged their support.

"The American Indian is a survivor of apartheid. If you want to see apartheid today in America, all you have to do is come to an Indian reservation" said Bill Means of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

During the 7-hour gathering, the Black intelligentsia was criticized as a class in preferring Mercedes-Benz cars and suburban condominiums and for not knowing its true Mother: Africa. Blacks were chastened for their collective silence over the recent bombing raids in South Africa in the neighboring black-ruled nations of Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe to politically destabilize the region and kill African National Congress freedom fighters. Students were urged to carry forward the divestment struggle.

—AFRO SURVEY—

Will 'Hands Across America' be helpful to the needy?



Jacqueline Yancer



Dianne Lowe



Lisa Carter



Charles Hurd

This week the question to the man and woman on the street is, "Do you think the 'Hands Across America' campaign will be helpful in feeding the hungry and providing for the homeless?"

Jacqueline Yancer, secretary, 21, "Yes, because a great deal of people participated in it. It was for a good cause, a very good cause."

Dianne Lowe, student, 22, "I think it will. It's not going to cure it, but every little helps. Even if it doesn't reach its goal, it will help. I think it would help more if Reagan was really behind it. I think it was pretty ridiculous to be in line right after his comments on hunger."

Lisa Carter, retail advertising salesperson, 23, "No, I really don't. The way it was put together seems too quick. Also, they couldn't say who was in charge or who was actually going to get the money. Sure, some homeless and hungry people will get help, but the majority won't."

Charles Hurd, mover, 31, "No, I don't think it will. I believe they will use the money for something else. I just don't have any trust in it, none at all."

Darlene Hall, unemployed, 20, "I think so. After all 'U.S.A. for Africa' made a lot of progress. So, I don't see why 'Hands Across America' would not be as successful. I think that the more programs they have, the more people will be aware."

Caroline Harcum, writer, over 40, "It was a good publicity stunt, though it was no panacea, as far as hunger and homeless are concerned. I agree with one editorial: 'Such activities are not a panacea. Solutions lie in the economic system and in the attitude of Americans regarding poverty.' "

Norman Henderson, cement foreman, 26, "No, because it is phony, just something to make the rich man richer and the poor man poorer."

Patricia Taylor, medical assistant, 20, "In a way, yes. For a time people didn't believe there were hungry people in America. This event has brought it to the attention that hungry people are here. I hope it will be successful in raising money, getting homes for people and also providing jobs."



Darlene Hall



Caroline Harcum



Norman Henderson



Patricia Taylor



Bloodnotes

R. B. Jones

Sainted NAACP

I love WEAA's Two Way Talk Show. It has its flaws, for example some people call every day, despite the incoherence of what they often say. Others belonging to organizations based on mythology and distortions of fact call in regularly to redundantly spout their unsubstantiated generalizations.

Sometimes the hosts allow callers to make outlandish statements that are not challenged. If the call letters really mean We Educate African Americans then the talk show hosts must puncture misconception on the air.

Inspite of these problems Two Way Talk is a fascinating way to spend a couple of hours in the evening. When the regulars are not on the line it is a way of hearing the diversity of opinions in the black community.

One of the recurring themes on the show is the role of the NAACP in black life. Many callers express disdain for the group calling it a bourgeoisie clique that is not really committed to the progress of the masses of black people.

Other callers defend the civil rights groups. One thing is certain, however and that is that one of the hosts will usually defend the civil rights group. This is only natural in the case of particular host who is the executive director of the group and another who serves on the board of the local NAACP branch.

One thing I find amusing is the vigor with which the group is defended on the air. People sometimes make the NAACP sound as sacred as some people believe the Shroud of Turin is. Criticism of the agency is consider sacrilegious.

Often it is said that the NAACP has gotten blacks to where they are today and I often wonder whether that is such a good place to be considering the social fragmentation affecting the black community now.

Defenders cite the heroic record of the group in fighting for black people's constitutional rights. They cite its role in fighting segregation.

The problem with callers to WEAA is not the fact that they criticize the NAACP, for what group or personalities are above criticism? The problem is that their criticism for the most part are vague and generalized very much like the behavior of the group they are criticizing.

The critics' nebulous attacks allow the defenders to make vague and emotion laden defenses. The NAACP is obsolete. It is based on a premise, integration at any price, and a blind belief in the courts as a remedy for racism.

Integration of a people who are weak economically, politically, culturally and psychologically, into a system that is run by people who are taught from the crib onward to regard the weaker people with contempt and who are also taught to respect only power, causes the weaker individual further doom and tragedy.

The notion that the court system, which has a consistent record of racism and a sporadic record of racial justice, is the bedrock of black salvation in this society is deeply flawed.

The courts administer laws that are temporary and are affected by the social forces that control society.

The courts administer laws that are temporary and are affected by the social forces that control society. The courts change judicial trends much as they personally perceive patterns of social change.

The courts fluctuate. In the last 20 years, under the Warren Court, certain legal precedents were set increasing the awareness of society to the rights of the accused. The Burger Court of the present day has come along and reversed many of these history making decisions. Can anyone really depend on the courts for freedom?.

The NAACP depends on the courts because it believes so deeply in the present social system which is designed to defeat the group's purpose. It is sad and embarrassing sometimes to see the group blast the movie "The Color Purple" on one hand and then cry some crocodile tears when that cinematic lynching receives no academy awards.

The NAACP criticized blacks in the entertainment industry for not supporting their people and then about a week later it retracted. I think it was so funny when the Hollywood Chapter gave an image award to Jennifer Beales a few years ago for uplifting the image of black people in films and she doesn't even like being classified as black.

Another amusing event occurred a couple of years age when a dead man was voted onto the national board. That indicated a deep lack of seriousness to many observers.

The problem is not that the NAACP fails to serve a viable purpose for it does. The problem is that its sacrosanct image and extreme defensiveness about criticism tends to make the group insular and isolated from the people.

It really has no active program of involvement for the average man and woman on the street. This is not surprising since its inception it has been a group tightly controlled by the black middle class with an agenda that has primarily benefited them. That's why Fannie Lou Hamer once called it the National Association for the Advancement of Certain People.

The NAACP is beneficial however because it illustrates the folly of believing blindly in the basic correctness of the social order (capitalism, imperialism etc.). The group illustrates the bankruptcy of integration without black self-development.

The NAACP keeps FBI informants and police agents tied up who might be harassing other people and it helps soothe the guilt of a lot of middle class Americans.

It will not likely ever return to what it was in the 1960s because there is no Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. around to force the NAACP and the black church into the streets to demonstrate alongside common folk. The flip-side of this is that despite its obsession with the self-preservation of its image as the only freedomfighter around the NAACP occasionally does some good on local issues.

It is neither the road to freedom nor a totally useless relic. It is just one more group subject to criticism like all the rest.

MAY 1986